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DRIED PRUNES

A radio interview between Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, June 6, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm Home Hour, ^{of Agriculture}

JOHN BAKER:

Back in Washington we are, and all ready to tell you more about one or two of the foods that have been declared "in surplus" by the Department of Agriculture. I asked Rowena Carpenter to come over from the Bureau of Home Economics today because surplus commodities has been her middle name for over a year, -- long before we began talking about the food stamp plan. When the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation needs to know about the food value of a product declared in surplus, or wants some low-cost recipes to send out, it's Mrs. Carpenter's phone that begins ringing. One side of her desk is reserved for surplus commodities folders. What's that in your hand, Mrs. Carpenter?

ROWENA CARPENTER:

A folder from that special side of my desk, Mr. Baker. Something about prunes in fact.

BAKER:

Of course, dried prunes, plentiful and low in price, easy to ship, even from California to the East Coast.

CARPENTER:

Yes, from California; most of our dried prunes do come from that State, but don't forget Washington and Oregon. They're in the prune business, too, in a big way.

BAKER:

Bigger prunes if not bigger crops!

CARPENTER:

That's very good, Mr. Baker. The Oregon and Washington prune plums are a larger variety than the kind grown in California, larger and not quite so sweet. Either variety suits me, though.

BAKER:

Same here. Never out-of-season, good the year round. What are those figures about the supply?

CARPENTER:

Plenty for everybody. Last August and September the crop of prune plums was abundant, and as usual the bulk of the crop was dried. 260,000 tons of dried prunes were stored on farms or in the warehouses of packers, to be shipped as needed.

BAKER:

260,000 tons, -- that was enough to take care of exports to Europe, to lay by a supply for early fall before the new crop would be dried, and still have plenty to stock the grocer's shelves.

(over)

CARPENTER:

Yes, and the pantry shelf. You know prunes are a good staple in the pantry or cupboard, always handy for a quick meal.

BAKER:

Quick? What about soaking? Have to think of that pretty far ahead, don't you?

CARPENTER:

No, only an hour at the most these days. Some prunes are so moist that they are plump enough with less soaking, or with no soaking at all. The first step in getting prunes ready for the table is thorough washing in hot water. Then soak them in a fresh lot of hot water, and cook them in the soaking water.

BAKER:

Cook how long?

CARPENTER:

That depends on the kind of prunes and the amount you are cooking. On the average, enough prunes for five or six servings will cook tender in about half an hour. I forgot to say it's better to simmer than to boil the prunes; and if you like them sweetened, add the sugar during the last five minutes of cooking. I like to add a little salt, too, just enough to bring out the good prune flavor.

BAKER:

And I like a little lemon or orange juice squeezed over my prunes for breakfast.

CARPENTER:

Or some spice and vinegar added to stewed prunes during the last five minutes of cooking, with a little extra sugar, and that salt I spoke of. Then you have spiced prunes to serve with meat at dinner. You see why I say prunes are handy to have on the emergency shelf; so many uses for them.

BAKER:

Yes, prunes stuffed with cottage cheese would make me a good salad, with a little lettuce and salad dressing about now!

CARPENTER:

And if you had oranges or grape fruit, or both, you could make a star salad -- prunes stuffed with cheese, skinned sections of orange and of grape fruit arranged between the prunes in the shape of a star.

BAKER:

A refreshing lunch, no so bad for vitamins either. Right?

CARPENTER:

Right! Prunes are a good source of vitamin A, and they have some vitamin B and vitamin G thrown in for good measure. Then there's the iron, too, and some calcium. And the grapefruit and orange are rich in vitamin C.

BAKER:

The cheese, don't forget it. Milk solids -- protein and part of the vitamin content of the milk. And plenty of calories in the salad dressing.

CARPENTER:

And when you want a change, try a mixed fruit and vegetable salad: stewed prunes cut up with diced raw apple, or with shredded cabbage and shredded raw carrots

BAKER:

Or for a cool night, how about that fried apple and onion combination with pitted cooked prunes added after the apples are tender?

CARPENTER:

Excellent. A hot plate, -- fried apples, onions and prunes, with a strip or two of crisp bacon, and a whole wheat muffin. Whole wheat, you know, is another food that has been declared in surplus.

BAKER:

And a very good addition to the list, I should say. Has all of the vitamin and mineral content of the wheat grain.

CARPENTER:

Yes, and those vitamins and minerals help a lot in a low-cost diet. You know we always say that whole grain flour and whole grain breakfast foods become especially important in meals of limited variety -- for families who may not be using enough fruits and vegetables to supply all of the vitamin and minerals they need.

BAKER:

That's worth remembering, especially when there are children in the family. Any recipes for using whole wheat flour?

CARPENTER:

Yes, our bulletin on home baking tells how to substitute whole grain flours for white flour in bread and muffins.

BAKER:

That's Farmers' Bulletin 1775, Homemade Bread, Cake, and Pastry. I believe that folks who are using whole wheat cereal might like to order it: F.B. 1775 --

CARPENTER:

And these ways of serving prunes that we were exchanging a few minutes ago. Don't you think some folks might like to have our suggestions and others for prunes? There's a mimeograph, you know, with prune recipes.

BAKER:

That's right! Prune Recipes it's called. We'll see that there are plenty of copies of the prune circular on hand for anyone who writes in for it.

If you'd like a copy of the circular on prune recipes----or the bulletin on homemade bread, cake, and pastry----write to the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture---Washington, D.C. The bulletins are free.

